
Review

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makes a quatrain. The following quotation will suffice to indicate the tone of this life, which has a certain value for the linguist and student of folklore, though not precisely the value we had expected :—“Let us see now,” said Barthin, “how that alms, which was taken from the king in spite of him, will profit him.” Columb Cille went in his own body up in the air to fight with the devils for that soul like an angel or a pure disembodied spirit, and he began to fight bravely with them. The devils asked him what right he had against themselves to take that soul from them, seeing that the man had never done a favour while he was alive that would profit his soul. “I have an alms of his,” said Columb Cille. “He has no claim for merit for an alms which he did not bestow of his own free will,” said the devils. “Knew ye,” said Columb Cille, “that in whatever way a servant of God obtains a gift from a person, the goodness of God can give him merit for that ?” Columb Cille overthrew the devils in that battle, so that by virtue of that alms which he took from the king against his will he obtained from God that the king should assume his own body again in order that he might do penance and satisfaction for his sin, and that he might be a faithful servant to God and to Columb Cille from that act. So that king is the only person who was ever saved in spite of himself.’

Dr. George Henderson, our learned minister of Eadar-dha-Chaolais, gives a fourth instalment of a highly technical treatment of the Gaelic dialects in many respects new and interesting. The local names in the ‘Arthuriana’ in the ‘Historia Brittarum’ are minutely treated by Auscombe, who localises Arthur’s victories at the mouth of the Loyne, on the river Daylas, near Baxenden, near Leeds, at Binchester, at Chester-on-the-Dee, on the river Goyt, at Leintwardine, at Acanbury. New light is thrown on the Brendan legend by Professor Plummer of Corpus Christi College, Oxford. M. Loth contributes ‘Notes Britanniques,’ and Professor Dr. Stern of Berlin a short article : ‘Die Bekehrung der Fiauna.’ There are some interesting notes, among them one on the derivation of *Paisley*, by Mr. W. J. Watson of Inverness Academy, who takes it from the Latin *basilica*, a church, and compares Irish place-names of the same origin. The reader will here also find a letter from the renowned Jacob Grimm.

Musical Instruments. Part I. The Irish and the Highland Harps. By ROBERT BRUCE ARMSTRONG. Edinburgh: David Douglas. 4 guineas.

The author of this book has brought together so much information on the subject of harps, Irish and Highland, that it does not seem possible that anything further can ever be written about them. Surely he has omitted no reference or quotation, nor any illustration, whether from metal, wood, or stone, which might bear upon his subject. Mr. Armstrong writes as one having authority. He makes it quite apparent that he writes out of a fulness and minuteness of knowledge, and a cultured and broad interest in all that appertains to the harp, its construction and embellishment, its

music, its performers, and its recorders and historians. Every source, too, is laid under contribution, and as a result we have a large and handsome volume, which is in no hackneyed sense a mine of information, and which will be a living pleasure to every one who loves the music of the Gaelic people. In examining the historical evidence as to the exact meaning of the word 'bard,' Mr. Armstrong comes to the conclusion that in Ireland the bards were men 'capable of producing poetry of considerable excellence, who were either uneducated or had not gone through the same severe course of study as the professional poets,' and thinks that in Scotland the word had the same signification, but that in the sixteenth century 'bard' may have come to mean a minor poet. It is an interesting point, as is also the question whether or not a bard was a musician. If Mr. Armstrong be right—and he brings some strong evidence out—the ordinary conception of a bard would require some adjusting. Yet in another light it would indicate that the bard was the man with poetic inspiration, and that the other was a poet only or chiefly by virtue of training. And have we not been assured that 'poets are born, not made,' and does not all literature proclaim the truth of the assurance? In Gaelic literature this is especially evident, for some of our most living poems have been composed by persons who in the ordinary sense of the word were quite uneducated. There can be no doubt that for centuries 'bard' and 'filidh,' for instance, have been synonymous, both equating 'poet.' But did the bard of old compose or did he only recite poetry? and did the bard recite to the music of the harp?

Music, poetry, and the reciting of tales and ballads were much in vogue among the Celts, and were a most important means of culture. Musical instruments were more numerous than is commonly supposed. From the ancient Irish we get the names of eighteen musical instruments, including stringed, wind, and percussion, with some others which cannot be classed, and we are told that many of these were in use in Scotland. From the oldest times kings and chiefs had their musicians, and were entertained by them. In the year 593 B.C., according to O'Curry, the profession of music was on a regularly organised system. Youths studied certain exercises and passed certain examinations, so to speak; that is, they had to prove that they were fitted to pass from one grade, and had to be able to play very intricate music. There were several famous schools and many famous musicians both in Ireland and the Highlands. According to Brehon law the emoluments of the musician varied in accordance with his rank. 'The head of the profession was allowed a standing income of twenty-one cows, and sufficient land to maintain them in territory set apart by the clan for such purposes, besides ample refections for himself and his attendants. He was also entitled to two hounds and six horses, and, like the higher members of the literary professions, could confer the privilege of sanctuary. When travelling he was not allowed to lodge at the house of a person of lower rank than himself. A certain number of his pupils were entitled to hospitality at the hands of their master's host, but we are told that, if this number were

exceeded, the overplus were always most willingly entertained either by their master's host or by his neighbours. Surely no people, ancient or modern, ever showed a greater appreciation of music and musicians. In Ireland, probably also in Celtic Scotland, the harp was held in the greatest esteem, and the highest grade of harper ranked as a noble. Both Scotland and Wales are said to owe the harp and much of its music to Ireland, though the Scottish Gael is said to have eclipsed his instructor.

Mr. Armstrong laments the disuse of the harp in Ireland, but there is a revival of it in recent years, which it is to be hoped will increase largely. Scotland has now, unfortunately, little part in the use of the harp, for she had lost more of the tradition than Ireland had. Lord Archibald Campbell has made praiseworthy efforts for the revival of the small harp, now known as 'clarsach,' in connection with the Highland Mòd. But for some reason they have not met with the success one would wish. One reason is probably the expense, both initial and upkeep, of the harp. Many players make the mistake of resting the 'clarsach' on the knee, which destroys all chance of clearness and purity of sound. It would be of interest to know how the old harpists combined the voice and the instrument. Did they play and sing the melody ? or did they chant to the harp as Mrs. Florence Farr Emery chants to the psaltery, devised for her by Mr. Arnold Dolmetch, and the inception or revival (if it be an old form) of which combination is largely due to Mr. W. B. Yeats ? Or did the harpers of those fargone days play the melody and strike in with a vocal harmony as in the Penillion singing of Wales ? an evidently old survival still in common use. Perhaps they used all these combinations as well as the ordinary one of singing the melody and playing the accompaniment.

Mr. Armstrong gives many quotations from high authorities to show what perfection had been arrived at by Irish and Scots, especially in performing on the harp, and to show how highly their performances were thought of by the cultured persons who described them. It gives a great sense of satisfaction to read, on the authority of such able judges as are cited, of the high artistic attainments of our Celtic ancestors, and to know that therefore they cannot have been quite the barbarians which some writers would fain force us to believe.

There are many illustrations of old harps still in existence in the book, as well as reproductions of old illustrations from various places. These are very beautiful in tone and in execution, and the drawings and photographs have evidently been prepared with the greatest care. There are drawings and photographs too of details of ornamentation of harps, which give us some idea of the very great labour expended on beautifying these treasures, for they were indeed treasures for the eye as well as the ear. And besides illustrating them, the author has described the various instruments in great detail, their measurements, their histories, and the famed musicians who used them. Indeed, not the least charming feature of the book is the almost personal contact into which we are brought with the makers and users of

these beautiful old harps. We see the men who make the harps for the love of them, choosing with thoughtful care the sallow and other woods which would give the sweetest tone. We can see them, too, weaving graceful and intricate interlacing, and burning out the design on all available parts of the frame. They worked, not for the price to be paid, but because they loved music and art, and theirs has lasted as work done in such a spirit does last. No higher praise can be given to Mr. Armstrong's own work—this big book on the Irish and Highland Harp—than to say that it too is done in this spirit of reverent love, and therefore it is of the best and will remain a treasure-house of information for many generations of music lovers.

N O T E S

Connradh na Gaedhilge

The Gaelic League, founded in 1893, at present consists of upwards of 750 affiliated branches, having an average membership of seventy. The large majority of those branches is of course in Ireland, but there are many in Great Britain, North and South America, Australia, New Zealand, and South Africa. The objects of the League are :—(1) The preservation of Irish as the national language of Ireland and the extension of its use as a spoken tongue ; (2) The study and publication of existing Irish literature and the cultivation of a modern literature in Irish.

The influence and efforts of the League are not, however, confined to the language alone. The spirit of initiative and self-reliance, self-help, and self-preservation which the movement generates is the strongest factor in the promotion of the present industrial revival. All leaguers consider themselves bound to support Irish manufacture, and there exists besides in connection with almost every branch a sub-committee specially charged with looking after the interests of Irish industries.

The governing body of the League is called the Coisde Gnotha, and consists of thirty members (besides the president and two vice-presidents) elected by the Annual Ard-Fheis or Congress, fifteen of whom are resident in Dublin and fifteen in the provinces.

The League has at present nineteen paid officers, and has just advertised for two more. These include ten organisers who devote all their time to the organisation of the more intensely Irish-speaking districts. Besides these organisers, whose movements are directed by the Coisde Gnotha, there are about ninety travelling instructors under the control of the various branches and local league bodies, who teach the branch classes, etc.

Last year the Education Board paid £5586 for the teaching of Irish as an 'extra' subject in the primary schools, and there has been a considerable